DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 070 007 CG 007 635

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TITLE	Attitudes and Characteristics of Nonusers.
PUB DATE	Apr 72
NOTE	7p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Performance; *College Students; *Drug Abuse; Lysergic Acid Diethylamide; *Marihuana; *Student Attitudes; *Student Behavior; Student Opinion; Student Reaction; Student Subcultures

ABSTRACT

The attitudes and life-style characteristics of 58 undergraduate nonusers of illegal drugs were evaluated through comparisons with 47 regular marijuana users. The nonusers were found to be more settled in their values, more goal-directed, and more involved academically. They also had higher Grade Point Averages. The nonusers appeared to be both knowledgeable and tolerant of marijuana use but to feel no need for its effects themselves. Statistics comparing the users and nonusers are presented on a number of other dimensions: (1) fraternity-sorority affiliation; (2) political attitudes; (3) satisfaction with the university; (4) stability of family; (5) religious preference; (6) involvement in work and extracurricular activities; (7) future career plans; (8) knowledge of sources of illegal drugs; (9) alcohol use; (10) attitude toward legalization of marijuana; and (11) attitudes toward LSD. It was concluded that nonusers share the traditional goals of working and studying hard to get ahead. (Author/BW)

ED 070007

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Attitudes and Characteristics of Non-Users

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Students who do not use illegal drugs have become a minority on many college campuses. The University of Miami is one of these. The 58 students comprising this sample of non-users did not use drugs at the time they were interviewed and had never tried any illegal drugs. The purpose of this analysis of the non-users is to discover if, in fact, there are any distinguishing characteristics of this group other than the lack of drug use.

In a previous paper presented by Rockway and Kahn, this same sample of non-users was discussed. Through the use of a personality scale, the Personality Research Form, these authors found that "in general, non-users appeared to be more achievement-oriented and ambitious, more academically concerned, less gregarious and less autonomous than users. They show less likelihood to be emotionally expressive and spontaneous or to emphasize frivolous or carefree activities for their own sake. Non-users are less curious and less self-reflective than drug users of all categories and appear more concerned with influencing the world around them, and the issue of control is more central to them. They also seem much more likely to persist in goal-related behaviors." Non-users were also found to be neater in appearance and to have higher needs for order, regulation, promptness and harmavoidance.

Throughout this paper, the non-users will be compared to the group of 47 regular marijuana smokers, a group to which they are similar in age

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and educational status. It was felt that it would be most useful to compare them to students who regularly, not casually, use drugs. Marijuana smokers were selected because marijuana is generally assumed to be the mildest of the drugs studied. As will be shown, a number of differences between these two groups exist, differences which in most cases would be even greater if the non-users were being compared with the heavier drug users.

The students were evenly divided among the academic years and their religious preferences were reflective of the total university population. Seventy-two per cent of their natural parents were still married to each other, a smaller percentage than that of the parents in the sample of regular marijuana smokers, 86%. This difference does not indicate that non-users come from more stable family backgrounds, as is sometimes assumed.

In regard to their campus life, the non-users and marijuana smokers had the same amount of fraternity-sorority affiliation, 20%. The non-users were slightly more satisfied with the University of Miami, with 69% of them stating that they were very satisfied or moderately satisfied with the University, as compared to 62% of the regular marijuana smokers. Fifty-four per cent of the non-users had a part-time job or major extracurricular activity in which they spent an average of three hours a week; only 30% of the smokers were engaged in comparable jobs or major extracurricular activities.

Politically, 41% of the non-users described themselves as liberal as compared to 73% of the regular marijuana smokers. This finding of less

liberalism among non-users corroborated the findings of many similar studies. The non-users did not particularly admire any current political figure. As for political groups, the Democrats were admired by 22%, the Republicans by 14%, no group by 52%, with the remainder admiring various other groups. Of the regular marijuana smokers, only 6% admired the Democrats and only 8% the Republicans. Interestingly, although 52% of the non-users professed admiration for no political group, this figure was much higher, 74%, for the regular marijuana smokers. In fact, on almost all attitudinal questions in this survey, the non-users were consistently less inclined than the smokers to give responses such as "no opinion" or "undecided." From this response pattern, it might be inferred that the non-users are more settled in their values and life styles.

Academically, the non-users selected the various majors to virtually the same extent as regular marijuana smokers. It has been found that non-users often tend to major more in the sciences and in business, but this was not the case in the Miami sample. Non-users had a higher mean grade point average, 2.79, as compared to 2.50 for the marijuana smokers. They also reported studying more, averaging about three hours daily, as compared to 2 1/3 for the regular smokers. Non-users were also more satisfied with their academic performance in college, with 69% of them stating that they were at least moderately satisfied as compared to 58% of the regular marijuana smokers. Only 21% of the non-users were undecided as to their future career plans as opposed to 43% of the regular marijuana smokers. Further, 24% of the non-users planned to pursue a career which required additional education beyond the baccalaureate degree, while only 11% of

the marijuana smokers planned such careers. Thus, a picture emerges of the non-users as being more achievement oriented and goal directed. They work and study more than the regular marijuana users, and at the same time are more satisfied with both college life and their academic performance. Their grade point averages are also higher.

The non-users cited their lack of need of marijuana as the major reason for their non-use, with 44% of them giving this reason. This was mentioned much more often than fear of harmful effects, stated by 28%, or a variety of miscellaneous reasons.

While the non-users do not find a need for marijuana, a majority of them do seem to use alcohol. It is interesting to note that 62% of the 21 non-users questioned in depth about their alcohol consumption had used some form of alcohol during the week in which they were questioned. Similarly, 67% of the 15 regular marijuana smokers questioned about alcohol had used some form of it during the week in which they were interviewed. The most typical reason given for drinking among the non-users, stated by 62%, was "social pressure or social occasion." Although this was the most frequent response for alcohol use among marijuana smokers also, only 40% cited it as a reason. Thirty-three per cent of the regular marijuana smokers mentioned the good taste of liquor and 20% mentioned its relaxing effects. These responses were more frequent among the regular marijuana smokers than the non-users, who answered 17% and 14%, respectively. Drinking, as compared to smoking, is socially acceptable according to traditional standards and can therefore fit into the life style of the conventional non-users. As has been discussed previously, and can be seen again in the responses as to the reasons for

drinking, the regular marijuana smokers are more pleasure seeking, enjoying the good taste and the relaxing effects of liquor, while the non-users tend to drink primarily for social reasons.

The non-users seemed to be rather aware of drugs despite their non-use of them. Almost 83% said that they would know where or how to obtain illegal drugs if they wanted them and 76% had seen people they knew using or possessing illegal drugs, suggesting that this sample was not isolated from students who use drugs. Yet only 14% of them felt that they might ever try an illegal drug and all of these respondents mentioned marijuana as the drug they would try--not hashish or LSD, the other two questionnaire alternatives.

While few of the non-users intended to try drugs, many of them displayed liberal attitudes regarding marijuana. In regard to its legalization, 40% of the non-users felt marijuana should be legalized; 43% felt it should not; and 17% did not know. Again, there is a large difference in the responses of the regular marijuana smokers on the question of legalization. Eighty-one per cent of the regular marijuana users felt that marijuana should be legalized, 13% felt it should not, and 6% did not know. The non-users were more in agreement against the legalization of LSD, with only 7% of the non-users favoring legalization and 90% opposing it, with the remaining 3% unsure. Similarly, only 6% of the regular smokers felt LSD should be legalized, 73% felt it should not, and 21% were unsure.

In connection with the question of legalization, students were also asked to rate the dangers of marijuana and LSD. Their responses were

consistent with their feelings toward legalization; none of the non-users rated LSD as being free from danger, and 85% rated it as having extreme danger. Of the regular marijuana smokers, only one student rated LSD as being danger free, with 49% rating it as extremely dangerous, and 43% rating it as moderately dangerous. The answers, as could be expected, were more diverse for marijuana--10% of the non-users rated it as having no danger, 9% rated it as having extreme danger, and the remaining 81% felt it had little or moderate danger. Of the regular marijuana smokers, 55% rated it as having no danger, no one rated it as having extreme danger, and the remaining 44% rated it as having little or moderate danger. The non-users were fairly equally divided into thirds as to whether or not they felt marijuana could lead to hard drugs, with 1/3 responding yes, 1/3 no, and 1/3 stating they didn't know. In contrast, only 6% of the marijuana smokers felt that marijuana did lead to hard drugs, 9% didn't know, and 85% felt it did not.

The non-users were rather tolerant in their attitudes toward marijuana. They did not use it because they felt they had no need for it, rather than for moral reasons such as it being very "wrong." They were aware of drug use on the campus. Almost half of them felt marijuana should be legalized and a third did not believe that it leads to hard drugs. Only 9%, or five students, rated it as extremely dangerous. Like the regular marijuana smokers, the non-users are, however, not at all condoning of LSD. A large majority of them, 90%, felt it should not be legalized and 85% rated it as an extremely dangerous drug. A distinction between the two drugs was evident in the attitudes of non-users; they did not put all illegal drugs into the same category.

While their attitudes toward marijuana may be liberal the non-users report having no need for such a pleasure-producing drug in their own lives. There seems to be a value system of involvement or commitment among the non-users which emerges from the data. They tend to work and study more than drug users, have more definite career plans and higher grade point averages. Perhaps one could say the non-users share the traditional goals of working and studying hard to get ahead--as can be corroborated by the previously mentioned personality data--and they are fulfilling these goals by the conventional means. Drug use simply does not enter into this picture.